Menzaleh. A large flock was seen daily at Gheit-el-Nassara flying about round the fish-market. At present I cannot perceive any difference between the birds of this species shot here and British examples.

Podiceps cristatus.

Podiceps cristatus Shelley, p. 312.

A single Great Crested Grebe was seen on Lake Menzaleh during a trip to Matariah.

Podiceps nigricollis.

Podiceps nigricollis Shelley, p. 313; Loat, Ibis, 1906, p. 124.

A great many Black-necked Grebes were seen in Lake Menzaleh as we approached Matariah, and two examples in winter plumage, which had been caught near Matariah, were brought home alive. This species appears to be a regular winter visitor to Egypt.

XXII.—*On the Russian Arctic Expedition of* 1900-1903.

By H. E. Dresser, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

Although the Russian Arctic Expedition of 1900–1903, undertaken under the leadership of the late Baron E. W. Toll, was one of great interest, especially to ornithologists, very little is known of the scientific results except in Russia, as all the details have been published in Russian only (Mémoires de l'Acad. Imp. des Sciences de St. Pétersbourg, viii. sér. vol. xviii. no. 2). I have, therefore, with the assistance of Mr. J. A. Groes, a Russian gentleman now living in England, made the following *résumé* of the ornithological portion of the report on the scientific results of the expedition, which was written by Mr. A. A. Biabynitski-Birulia, biologist to the expedition, whom I had the pleasure of meeting when last in St. Petersburg. The 'Sarja,' the vessel in which the expedition was undertaken, left in July 1900, and the first halt was made in the Gulf where the shore of the Western Taimyr turns sharply to the east in 75° 52′ N. lat. and 92° 59′ E. long. Here the explorers

remained three weeks, until the 3rd/16th September, and then tried to push further north and east, but had finally to cast anchor and take up their winter-quarters in 76° 68′ N. lat. and 95° 9′ E. long. in the roadstead Sarja, where they remained until the 11th/24th August, 1901. Thence ornithological expeditions were undertaken by Dr. Walter, the well-known ornithologist, and Mr. Birulia along the shores of the mainland, across the Taimyr Straits to the south coast of the so-called Taimyr Gulf. Dr. Walter's ornithological notes were published after his death, which took place at Kotelny Island on the 21st December, 1902, and of these I have already given an abbreviated translation ('Ibis,' 1904, pp. 228–235).

After leaving the Taimyr coast the 'Sarja' took a north-easterly course, rounded Cape Chelushkin, and made for the New Siberian Islands, finally taking up her winter-quarters on the west side of Kotelny Island opposite the southern end of Belkorsky Island in Nerpitchi Bay. On the 25th May/7th June Baron Toll, together with Mr. Th. G. Zeberg, astronomer to the expedition, and two men from the Yansk district, left the 'Sarja' and undertook an expedition to Bennett Island, crossing in seal-skin canoes and leaving instructions that the 'Sarja' was to take them off from that island. This the vessel was prevented from doing, owing to the ice-barrier, and it appears from Baron Toll's papers, afterwards recovered on Bennett Island by one of the two relief expeditions sent in 1903, that he had at first intended to winter on the island, but had afterwards decided to attempt to return to the New Siberian Islands, rather late in the season when the weather was uncertain and the ice not firm. They left Bennett Island on the 26th October/8th November, but never reached the New Siberian Islands and doubtless perished on the way.

Mr. Birulia's notes on the birds observed during the expedition are very long and diffuse, and I have therefore deemed it advisable to give the following abbreviated translation of them :—

Lagopus albus.—The Willow-Grouse appeared to commence nidification about the middle of May, selecting places on the

cliffs on the sea-coast where the snow had commenced to thaw earlier than in the interior of the island, both on the western and high northern sides, for many nests were found in the latter district, whereas in the interior, even on the hilly portions of the tundra, neither nests nor the birds themselves were ever seen. For its nest the Willow-Ptarmigan selected some comparatively dry spot well-covered with long grass of the previous year and made an oval-shaped hollow in the turf, in which it placed its eggs without any lining. Two nests, however, which were found on the 2nd/15th June and the 14th/27th June were sparingly lined with a small quantity of *Thamnolia vermicularis* and a few downy feathers of the bird itself. The first of these measured 20 centimetres in length and 18 cm. in width, and the second 23 cm. in length, 18 cm. in width, and from 7 to 10 cm. in depth.

The full number of eggs in a clutch varied from ten to twelve, and the ivory merchants who accompanied Mr. Birulia on the islands told him that they had never found more than twelve eggs in a nest, either on the mainland or the islands, and that the usual number was from eight to ten. All the eggs, however, were not hatched, as in some old nests two unfertile eggs were found together with the shells of the eggs which had been hatched. Nests containing from ten to twelve eggs were found from the 2nd/15th to the 15th/18th June. Owing to the eggs assimilating so well to the dark brown colour of the tundra the nest is difficult to discern.

Lagopus mutus was breeding on the Taimyr, but was not seen on the New Siberian Islands. This was probably *Lagopus rupestris* and not true *Lagopus mutus*.

Colymbus adamsi was not uncommon on the coasts of the Tamyr. It was seen at the first winter-quarters of the expedition on the Western Taimyr, though not so often as *Colymbus septentrionalis*, but was not met with on the New Siberian Islands. This fact was confirmed by the ivory merchants. It nests rarely in the tundra of the Pri-Yansk district, but its real breeding-place is said to be on the lakes and inland waters on the border of the forest-zone. The Tungusian

Stepan Sergeier saw a nest of this Diver near the river Omolai.

Colymbus septentrionalis was common on the Taimyr, and numbers were nesting there, while it was also met with commonly on New Siberia.

Fulmarus glacialis was only once seen when crossing the Nordensköld Sea.

Uria mandti was observed on two occasions on New Siberia.

Larus glaucus was rare on the Taimyr, but was found breeding on the south coast of Taimyr Island. Mr. Birulia met with it on New Siberia and believes that it breeds there.

Larus affinis (*Larus cachinnans* var. of Birulia).—On the Taimyr this Gull commences nidification soon after its arrival, and the first nest, containing two eggs, was found on the 16th/29th June, 1901. The nesting-place selected is a large flat stone surrounded by the water running from the melted snow and ice, which forms small lakes on the tundra, where they are protected from the arctic fox and wolf. Mr. Birulia saw many nests on his expedition along the south coast of Taimyr Bay. On some larger stones he found two nests, one of which was always an old, half-destroyed nest, and it would seem that only one pair of Gulls makes use of the same stone.

The nest of this Gull is constructed as follows:—Firstly, a layer of moss is placed on the stone and then come layers of moss and reindeer-hair mixed with wing-feathers of Geese, the feather portion of these quills being inside and the stem of the quills outside the walls of the nest. From this mode of construction, the appearance of the structure was not very elegant owing to the protruding shafts of the quills, but the nests were so firmly built that they could be taken off the stone uninjured. They were warmly lined with down. The eggs varied from two to three in number, and were olivaceous in colour with dark spots. *Larus affinis* also nests in larger numbers on the small islets in the lakes of the Taimyr, in company with two other species of Gulls. On the south coast Mr. Birulia found a moderate-sized lake and

rather far from the shore was a small rocky island covered with Gulls' nests, where he saw *Larus affinis*, *Larus glaucus*, and *Larus vegæ*.

Larus vegæ was common on the islands of the New Siberian Archipelago, and apparently also on the coasts of the mainland, in the estuaries of the rivers from the Indigirka to the Yana and Omolai. On the New Siberian Islands in Nerpitchi Bay, Birulia saw old and young birds late in the autumn of 1901, and on New Siberia during the entire summer, while he had ample opportunities of observing this Gull, where it was first seen on the 24th May/6th June. As soon as the steep, sandy river-banks were free from snow *Larus vegæ* commenced nidification. He did not find any nests, but from the early part of June at the estuaries of all the small rivers he saw these Gulls, which, when approached, exhibited the greatest anxiety and evidently had nests in the vicinity. In the autumn he saw families of old and young birds. In 1903 Mr. Brousneff found nests of this Gull, containing eggs on the 10th/23rd June, on sandbanks near Cape Rojin. *Larus vegæ* does not, however, nest on the sea-shore exclusively, as on the 17th June/2nd July Mr. Birulia shot a male, which had incubation-patches, far from the sea in the interior of the Island of New Siberia, and saw several pairs, which led him to believe that they had nests there, apparently on small elevated places which were not flooded in the spring. On the whole, he did not meet with this Gull very often, though in 1902 it was more numerous than *Larus glaucus*. It was last seen on New Siberia Island on the 8th/21st September, when it was so cold that the thermometer shewed 20° Centigrade of frost, but in the previous year both old and young birds were observed in Nerpitchi Bay.

Rissa tridactyla was rare, and of accidental occurrence only, off the coasts of the Taimyr mainland, but large numbers were seen off the north coast of New Siberia and Bennett Island.

Rhodostethia rosea.—On approaching Bennett Island on the 29th Aug./11th Sept., 1901, the 'Sarja' encountered large

numbers of birds, chiefly flocks of *Rissa tridactyla* and *Rhodostethia rosea*, the latter being almost exclusively young, in consequence of which Mr. Birulia believed that they must have bred on Bennett Island. This Gull was not seen near the islands of the New Siberian Archipelago in the summer, but in the autumn, after the nesting-season, large numbers of old and young birds appeared in flocks keeping to the boundary of the floating ice. In 1902 Mr. Birulia saw the first young bird on New Siberia on the 3rd/16th August and the first flock of old birds on the 23rd Aug./5th Sept. Larger flocks were seen in the Straits of Blagovestchensk on the 29th Aug./11th Sept., where they were very shy and wary; a fortnight later large numbers of Rosy Gulls were seen on New Siberia, and the last were met with near Cape Rojin on the 7th/20th September.

Pagophila eburnea was not common on the north coasts of the mainland of Siberia and was only seen on four or five occasions late in the autumn after the first frosts had set in. Two adults and one young bird were first seen in the Bay of Kolomeitseff, near the Western Taimyr, on the 8th/21st September, and on the 26th Sept./9th Oct. a single bird approached the 'Sarja.' None were seen during the next summer until the 13th/26th August, and in 1901, as the vessel was passing along the north coast of the East Taimyr, one was observed on the 20th of August, old style. In 1902 an old bird was first seen on the Island of New Siberia on the 26th Aug./8th Sept., and two or three days later a pair approached Mr. Birulia's hut, on each occasion a young and an old bird. The old birds were wary, but the young were very inquisitive, and both of them were shot. They had the rings round the eyes and the legs black. It would seem, therefore, that this Gull breeds on one of the islands of the De Long Group, north of the New Siberian Archipelago.

Tringa minuta.—In 1900 large numbers of Little Stints were seen during the passage from the Yugorski Shar to Middendorff Bay, and during the summer on the Western Taimyr near the roadstead Sarja. Mr. Birulia found the

first nest, containing much incubated eggs, on the 22nd June/5th July, 1901. From the 24th July/6th Aug. to the 8th/21st August flocks of Little Stints, together with Curlew-Sandpipers in immature plumage, were often seen. On the Island of New Siberia he saw no Stints either of the present species or *Tringa subminuta*.

Tringa maculata.—An example was shot by Mr. Birulia out of a flock on 12th/25th August, 1900, near a pool on an island in the Bay of Minin, but this Sandpiper was not seen again during the expedition.

Tringa striata was common and found breeding on the Taimyr Peninsula, while a Sandpiper was seen on one occasion on New Siberia in 1902 which was either of the present species or possibly *Tringa couesi*.

Phalaropus fulicarius was one of the commonest birds on the coasts of Northern Siberia. It was met with on the passage from the Western Taimyr to the New Siberian Islands, not only on the shores of the mainland and islands, but in the open sea on passage south from some unknown islands in the north. It was first seen in the Bay of Minin on 12th/25th August, 1900, and many flocks composed of young birds only were seen in the Bay of Middendorff. On the Western Taimyr they were first seen on the 25th May/7th June, 1901, along with other Waders, and they were common near pools and small lakes in the tundra, though evidently they do not breed there. Mr. Birulia saw flocks of young birds on the 30th July/13th Aug., and thinks that their breeding-place cannot have been very far distant. On New Siberia the first were seen on the 28th May/10th June and the last on the 1st/14th September.

Tringa subarquata was first seen on the 24th Aug./6th Sept. in small flocks on the shore of small bays in the Gulf of Middendorff, but was not at all common. In 1901 at the Sarja roadstead on the Taimyr coast it was the commonest Wader on the tundra. In my translation of Dr. Walter's notes I gave particulars of its nest and eggs, and in addition to these notes Mr. Birulia says that for the site of their nests they select the southern slopes of the hilly tundra

where the snow first melts and there form almost nesting-colonies, as the nests are tolerably close to each other, in most cases only a few steps apart, and even closer if those of the previous year are included. They are mere depressions in the moss in places where the moss or grass from the previous year is most abundant, and not unfrequently an old nest is made use of. Both the male and female incubate. On the south coast of Taimyr Bay, where Mr. Birulia was in July 1901, the Curlew-Sandpiper was much rarer. He did not see any on New Siberia, but Curlew-Sandpipers were met with on other islands of the Archipelago.

[To be continued.]

XXIII.—*Proceedings at the Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union*, 1908.

The Annual General Meeting of the British Ornithologists' Union for this year was held at the house of the Zoological Society of London, 3 Hanover Square (by permission), on May 20th. The Chair was taken by the President, F. DuCane Godman, Esq., D.C.L., F.R.S.

The Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting were read and confirmed.

The Report of the Committee announced the continued prosperity of the Union during the past year as regards both its membership and its finances.

The volume of 'The Ibis' for 1907 was the first of the Ninth Series, under the joint Editorship of Dr. P. L. Sclater, D.Sc., F.R.S., and Mr. A. H. Evans, M.A. It contained 685 pages and was illustrated by 10 coloured plates, 3 maps, and 34 text-figures.

With regret the Committee reported the deaths of the following Members of the Union since the last Annual General Meeting:—

F. C. Crawford, Prof. A. Newton, T. M. Pike, Howard Saunders, Earl Sondes, and C. A. Wright.